



CYBERBULLYING AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING: A CASE STUDY OF BANGALORE'S YOUNG ADULT

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ABSTRACT

In our digital age, cyberbullying profoundly impacts young adults' emotional health. This study explores its effects on individuals aged 18-27 in Bangalore, seeking to understand if its emotional toll is universal or selective. It investigates factors like peer support, family networks, and psychological resilience contribute to varied emotional responses.

Utilizing a quantitative approach, the study surveyed 200 young adults via an online questionnaire. This survey assessed their cyberbullying exposure, emotional reactions, coping strategies, and the perceived effectiveness of their support systems.

The findings reveal a complex picture: while many respondents reported minimal psychological impact, a considerable number experienced emotional distress. Resilient individuals frequently attributed their emotional stability to robust social support networks and well-developed coping mechanisms.

This research enriches existing literature by focusing on resilience-promoting factors among digitally active young people, rather than merely highlighting harm. The insights gained can inform the development of more effective, support-driven interventions. Such interventions would not only address immediate cyberbullying consequences but also reinforce protective factors within vulnerable populations. Understanding what drives resilience can help formulate strategies to bolster social support systems and psychological fortitude, ultimately fostering safer digital environments for young adults.

KEYWORDS: Cyberbullying, Emotional Health, Resilience, Social Support

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, where technology and online platforms have become intertwined with our daily lives, particularly for young adults, cyberbullying has emerged as a significant concern. The internet, once a simple tool, now weaves itself through our social, educational, and professional spheres—especially for those aged 18 to 27. In bustling cities like Bangalore, this digital integration feels even more pronounced. While the online space embraces connectivity and sharing, it also opens the door to new forms of harassment, often in the relentless shape of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying, using digital platforms to inflict emotional blows, poses a severe threat to our emotional well-being. Unlike traditional bullying, it's unyielding, knows no boundaries, and often hides behind anonymity. Victims find themselves subjected to humiliation, threats, social exclusion, or identity manipulation—often within the perceived safety of their own homes. For young adults, whose identities are still taking shape and emotions are finding their footing, the psychological consequences can be profound, manifesting as whispers of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and even suicidal thoughts.

However, not everyone carries these burdens in the same way.

Emerging research suggests that resilience and a sense of social support—whether from family, friends, or mentors—play pivotal roles in how individuals navigate cyberbullying. Despite global awareness of its impact, there remains a critical gap in understanding how these protective factors stand tall in culturally specific, urban Indian contexts like Bangalore. The city's socio-cultural fabric—woven with linguistic diversity, competitive academic and career landscapes, and evolving family structures—can significantly influence how young adults experience and respond to cyberbullying.

This study aims to delve into the psychological impact of cyberbullying on Bangalore's young adults while seeking out the protective mechanisms—both internal (like resilience and emotional regulation) and external (like social support systems)—that lend a hand to emotional recovery and well-being. By shifting its gaze from merely describing the problem to nurturing resilience, this research hopes to offer practical insights for developing context-sensitive intervention strategies that empower young adults to walk through the digital world safely and confidently.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Cyberbullying Victimization and Psychological Outcomes

Maurya et al. (2022) uncovered a strong link between

cyberbullying and psychological distress in a large study of Indian young adults. Their research revealed that repeated online harassment can lead to depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts. Female participants, they found, were especially vulnerable, highlighting a need for support systems that understand these specific challenges. The study emphasized that the emotional wounds of cyberbullying are not fleeting; they can linger and grow into chronic mental health issues. This underscores the urgency for early intervention and support structures that can embrace victims. Their findings speak directly to the present study, stressing the emotional weight of cyberbullying within the Indian context and the importance of discovering what helps people recover.

Coping Mechanisms in Cyberbullying

Singh and Sonkar (2013) explored the coping strategies adopted by Indian young adults who had faced cyberbullying. They discovered that direct actions, like blocking perpetrators, were most effective in helping manage stress. Emotional health suffered significantly when impersonation or persistent harassment crept in. The study also pointed out that female participants were more often targeted, hinting at the gendered nature of cyberbullying. Importantly, the researchers called for digital literacy training and accessible support systems to strengthen coping responses. Their work lends a hand to the current study by connecting specific coping strategies to psychological outcomes and reaffirming the need for targeted interventions.

Psychological Effects of Cyberbullying

Waisglass (2017) used established psychological tools to assess the long-term effects of cyberbullying on emotional well-being. The study found that victims carried higher stress levels, lower self-esteem, and reduced life satisfaction. These effects persisted, showing that cyberbullying leaves a lasting psychological imprint. Waisglass advocated for strength-based interventions that focus on optimism and social support to combat emotional distress. Her work lays a foundation for understanding the emotional impact of online abuse and supports this dissertation's aim to investigate not only the damage caused by cyberbullying but also the factors that foster resilience and recovery.

Cyberbullying, Coping, and Self-Esteem

Soomra et al. (2024) delved into how coping mechanisms mediate the relationship between cyberbullying and self-esteem among Indian youth. Using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, the study revealed that strategies like emotional regulation and cognitive reframing significantly lessened the negative psychological impact of online abuse. Participants who felt strong in their coping abilities demonstrated higher levels of emotional resilience and self-worth, even when harassment persisted. The authors urged for mental health education to be woven into academic institutions to equip students with practical coping tools. Their research lends support to the current study's focus on internal resilience and confirms that positive psychological attributes can buffer emotional damage.

Emotional Networks and Cyber Victimization

Molero et al. (2023) used network analysis to examine how cyberbullying experiences connect with symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress among university students. The study found that verbal abuse and exclusionary tactics held the strongest ties to emotional distress. These insights point to the nuanced psychological toll of cyberbullying and the necessity for tailored intervention strategies. The authors stressed the importance of providing accessible psychological support in educational settings and urged the early identification of distress indicators. Their research aligns with the objectives of this dissertation by underscoring the need for localized emotional support systems and validating the emotional complexity of cyber victimization.

Objectives of the study:

- To find out how common cyberbullying is among young people in Bangalore.
- To measure how seriously and in what different ways cyberbullying affects emotions, including causing anxiety, depression, anger, sadness, and low self-esteem.
- To explore and understand how support from friends, family, and mentors, helps lessen the emotional harm from cyberbullying.

Research Question:

- To what extent is cyberbullying experienced by young adults in Bangalore?
- In what ways does cyberbullying influence the daily life and functioning of young adults within this age group?
- How do perceived social support influence emotional recovery and resilience after cyberbullying?

METHODOLOGY

- Research Design: Quantitative method using an online survey.
- Participants: 260 young adults aged 18–27, all residing in Bangalore.
- Sampling Method: Simple random sampling — where each young adult aged 18–27 in Bangalore had an equal chance of being selected to participate in the survey.
- Data Collection Tool: Structured questionnaire created and shared via Google Forms.
- Analysis: Responses were analysed using pie charts and percentage-based summaries to find patterns and trends.
- Ethical Considerations: Participation was voluntary and anonymous, with no personal details collected.

ANALYSIS

This study zeroes in on the experiences of 260 young adults (aged 18–27) in Bangalore, using an online survey to explore the pervasive issue of cyberbullying. Our primary goal is to understand not only how frequently young people encounter online harassment, but also the significant emotional toll it takes, from anxiety to low self-esteem. Crucially, we also investigate the vital role of strong social support networks and individual resilience in helping these young individuals navigate and mitigate the psychological harm caused by such incidents, ultimately providing clear insights into both the scale

of the problem and the coping mechanisms at play through straightforward statistical analysis and visual representations:

Prevalence of Cyberbullying in the Past 12 Months (n=260)

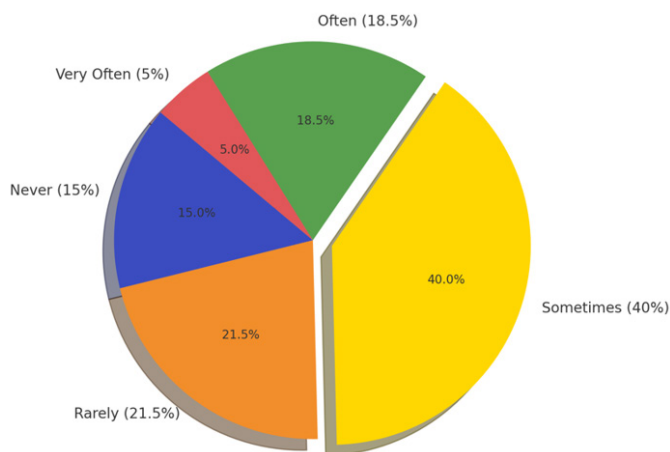


Figure 1

Out of 260 people surveyed about cyberbullying in the last year:

- 15% (39 people) have never experienced it.
- 85% (221 people) have experienced it at some level.
- 40% (104 people) experience it sometimes.
- 21.5% (56 people) experience it rarely.
- 18.5% (48 people) experience it often.
- 5% (13 people) experience it very often.

This shows that cyberbullying is very common, with most people experiencing it at least occasionally.

Emotional Responses to Cyberbullying (n=260)

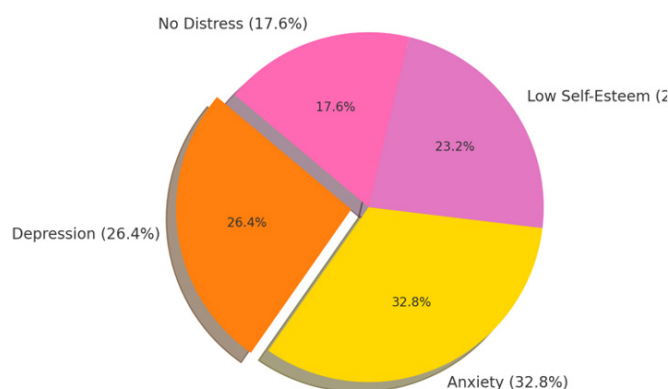


Figure 2

Cyberbullying leaves a significant mark on young adults, and our study of 260 participants in Bangalore paints a clear picture of its emotional fallout. A striking 82.4% of those surveyed reported experiencing some form of emotional distress due to cyberbullying, highlighting just how rarely it leaves someone

unaffected.

The most common emotional struggles included:

- Anxiety: Topping the list, impacting nearly a third of respondents at 32.8%.
- Depression: A significant concern for 26.4% of participants.
- Low Self-Esteem: Affected 23.2% of young adults.

Distribution of Support Channels Approached by Cyberbullying Victims (n=260)

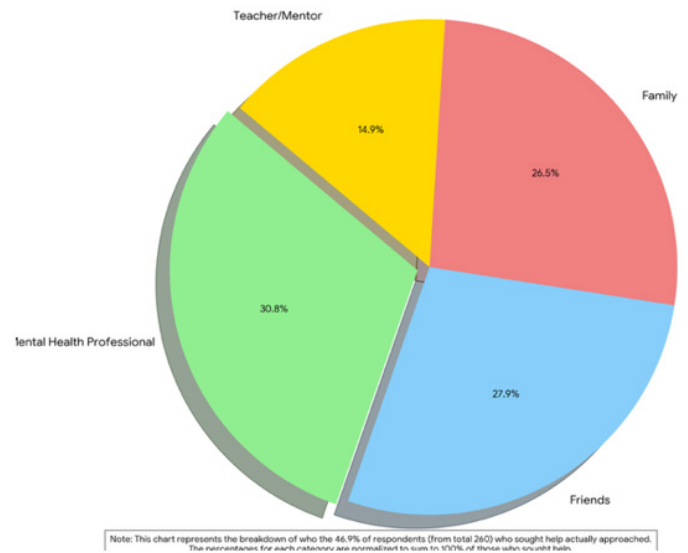


Figure 3

Here is the pie chart showing the distribution of support channels approached by cyberbullying victims. This chart focuses on the 46.9% of respondents who sought help after experiencing cyberbullying.

- Mental Health Professional: 30.8%
- Friends: 27.9%
- Family: 26.5%
- Teacher/Mentor: 14.9%

This visualization illustrates how young adults in Bangalore utilize various support networks when facing cyberbullying, with professional help, friends, and family being the most frequently approached sources.

FINDINGS

- **High Prevalence and Dominant Platforms:** Cyberbullying is a pervasive issue, with a substantial majority of young adults reporting experiencing it. The most common platforms where this occurs are Instagram and WhatsApp. Frequent forms of cyberbullying include verbal abuse, exclusion, and spreading rumours.
- **Profound Emotional and Functional Impacts:** Cyberbullying causes substantial distress, affecting a significant majority of respondents, with over half experiencing moderate to severe emotional harm. Common emotional reactions include anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Furthermore, a notable portion reported functional impacts such as sleep disturbances and reduced motivation.
- **Crucial Role of Support Systems and Resilience:** Strong support systems are vital for coping with cyberbullying,

with a large majority of respondents having one. Notably, a strong majority of those with robust support felt emotionally stable or resilient. Individual resilience also significantly reduced emotional harm. Among those who sought assistance, primary channels included Mental Health Professionals, friends, and family.

DISCUSSION

Based on the study's findings, cyberbullying stands out as a prevalent and impactful issue among young adults in Bangalore, yet the research also highlights the significant role of support systems and individual resilience in mitigating its effects.

The high prevalence of cyberbullying indicates its widespread nature within this demographic. It primarily occurs on platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp, predominantly through verbal abuse and social exclusion, underscoring the commonality of relational harm in online environments.

The emotional toll is substantial, with a vast majority of those affected experiencing distress, often including anxiety, depression, and lowered self-esteem. These impacts frequently disrupt daily functioning, emphasizing the serious mental health implications of cyberbullying.

Crucially, strong support systems are vital for emotional stability and resilience among victims. Individual resilience also plays a significant role in reducing harm. When seeking assistance, young adults rely on a mix of formal support, like mental health professionals, and informal networks, such as friends and family. This demonstrates that both types of networks are essential buffers against the detrimental effects of cyberbullying.

In summary, while cyberbullying is a common and damaging concern in Bangalore, robust support systems and personal resilience offer considerable protection to young adults.

LIMITATIONS:

Despite its valuable insights, certain limitations are present within this study. The focus was exclusively on young adults in Bangalore, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other geographical regions or age groups. Furthermore, reliance on self-reported survey data potentially introduced bias, as participants' experiences may have been underreported or exaggerated.

As a cross-sectional study, cause-and-effect relationships between cyberbullying and emotional well-being could not be definitively established. Additionally, emotional states such as anxiety and depression were assessed through perception-based responses rather than clinical diagnoses. The research's primary focus was placed on popular platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp, meaning other online environments with potentially differing cyberbullying dynamics were not explored. Lastly, institutional responses and legal interventions were considered beyond the scope of this particular study.

CONCLUSION

This study decisively confirms that cyberbullying is a significant and widespread challenge affecting young adults in Bangalore. The findings reveal its high prevalence across common social media platforms, leading to substantial emotional distress and often disrupting daily functioning for a considerable number of victims. Crucially, the research underscores the pivotal role of robust support systems – encompassing friends, family, mentors, and mental health professionals – alongside individual resilience, in mitigating the severe psychological impacts of online harassment. Ultimately, this investigation highlights the urgent need for integrated strategies that foster digital safety, strengthen support networks, and build personal resilience to safeguard the emotional well-being of young individuals in the evolving digital landscape.

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